

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF
POPULAR
LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

CONDUCTED BY R. CHAMBERS (SECUNDUS)

No. 12.—VOL. I.

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 1884.

PRICE 1½d.

THE TRANSVAAL GOLD-FIELDS.

BY ONE ON THE SPOT.

THE gold-fields of the Transvaal, which have been heard of by fits and starts during the last twelve years, have of late begun to excite considerable attention both at home and in South Africa ; and as the future of the Transvaal, and indeed a great portion of South-eastern Africa, depends very much on their proper development, a short description of the gold-bearing region may prove interesting to readers of this *Journal*.

Gold has been found scattered over a considerable extent of country here, and indeed is known to extend up to the Zambesi ; but the part most frequented by the gold-seeker is a belt of country running almost north and south, commencing on the Kaap River, a few miles east of the village of Middleburg, in the Transvaal, and terminating about ten miles north of Pilgrim's Rest, in the Lydenburg district. The principal 'farms' on which gold has been found in the Lydenburg district are Pilgrim's Rest, Berlin, Lisbon, Graskop, Mac-Mac, Spitzkop, Elandsdrift, and Hendriksdal—these so-called 'farms' being merely tracts of ground surveyed, but in scarcely any case used for actual farming purposes. There are numerous other 'farms' on which gold has been found ; but the above-named have, up to the present time, produced the largest quantity. From the Kaap River gold-fields, about fifty miles from Lydenburg, a considerable quantity of gold has also been extracted, partly on unallotted government ground, and partly from the 'farms' of private owners ; but this district has not been so extensively worked of late, owing to its unhealthiness in the lower reaches of the river, and also to the difficulty of working in such a broken country.

At the present time, comparatively little work is being carried on in either of the above districts, from causes which will be explained presently ; but that gold exists in considerable quantities, there is not the shadow of a doubt, as the returns

of banks and merchants for native gold purchased can show ; and although no capitalists have until recently made their appearance on the gold-fields, yet several exceptionally lucky diggers who came here with nothing beyond experience and stout hearts, have realised a competence, in spite of the disadvantages and troubles which such a rough life implies.

All the gold hitherto found, with very few exceptions, has been of the kind known as alluvial—that is, existing in the ground, and capable of being extracted by means of water alone, without the intervention of machinery ; but at present there are two Companies with machinery starting work-crushing quartz, the returns from which are looked forward to with much interest, as it will then be seen whether it will pay to import machinery on a large scale or not. When the gold-bearing ground lies at a comparatively low level, enabling water from any of the numerous streams running through the country to be brought on it, the process of gold-washing is very simple, the ground being merely picked loose and thrown into the water, or washed away by the water, which is then conducted through a long box, or race, about eighteen inches in width and depth, open on top, and paved with hard rock or quartz on the bottom, falling gradually for a distance of from twenty to two hundred feet in length, according to the strength of the stream running through the ground, and the quantity of ground washed per day. Once or twice a day the water is turned off from this race and a small stream of clean water run through it ; the race is then carefully examined from end to end ; and any nuggets or particles of gold which, by the action of the water and their greater specific gravity, may have been deposited in the ripples or inequalities of the bottom-paving, are then picked up, and the work resumed. In cases where the gold is of a fine nature, and liable to be carried away if the race alone were used, the coarser stones are sifted from the ground, and the combined ground and water run over coarse blankets, which, from the nature of their texture, catch all the

fine particles of gold and allow the lighter soil to flow away. These blankets are periodically washed out; and the fine particles of gold resulting are combined with quicksilver, which, from its affinity to gold, brings the whole into one mass, which is then placed in a retort, and the quicksilver evaporated off and caught for future use, leaving the gold in a solid mass behind.

The above process, costing very little in the way of outlay, has been of necessity almost the only one adopted by the diggers, who for the most part have been working-men, with little or no money; and in cases where the alluvial ground has lain so high above the level of the rivers as to prevent it being worked in the same way, the only difference has been that the ground has had to be excavated and brought to the water-race by carting or otherwise, the process of washing being the same. But in the case of quartz containing gold, the quartz has to be reduced almost to a powder in water by means of machinery; the crushed quartz then flows over plates coated with quicksilver, which catch the greater part of the gold; and that which escapes the quicksilver is caught by means of the blankets before mentioned, which receive it after passing the silvered plates.

It has struck many people who are acquainted with gold-mining in both Australia and California, that in no two places in the Transvaal are the indications of gold the same. In one place it is in vain to look for it except on the top of a hill; in another, the valley alone will yield gold; and not a few geologists and so-called mining experts who have visited the gold-fields lately, for the purpose of reporting on properties for intending purchasers, have been much at fault regarding the possibility of finding payable gold, and confessed that it is necessary to spend a considerable time before a property can be even cursorily examined. In most cases, it seems that the diggers themselves, through their actual experience, are better acquainted with the payable and non-payable ground than any stranger, however experienced otherwise, can be.

From 1873, the gold-laws of the Transvaal permitted a digger to take out a license for a claim on any gold-bearing property held to be the property of the government, and the digger paying the amount of this license for his right to dig for gold. When a claim was exhausted or found not payable, the digger was at liberty to abandon it and mark out another, in the event of this other not being occupied. This law, in a sparsely populated country, where scarcely any agriculture was carried on, worked very well and harmoniously; but on the retrocession of the Transvaal by the British government, a new order of things sprang into existence. In order to increase the revenue—which fell rapidly off on the departure of the British government, and has in consequence caused a widespread distress ever since amongst those who were the first to rise against British authority—the Volkraad or Boer Parliament granted concessions for every manufacture that could be carried on in the Transvaal—that is, allowing one man, on the payment of a certain sum per annum, the sole right to manufacture spirits; another, gunpowder; another, wool, &c.—in each case imposing a countervailing duty on articles of the same kind coming from

Europe, so as, if possible, to insure the sale of the Transvaal-made article. It is to be remarked, *en passant*, that the European articles, though thus hampered, still continue to have by far the largest sale. Amongst other concessions, a gold concession law was passed, specifying that the owner of any gold-bearing farm could, on the payment of a sum to be agreed upon per annum, obtain the sole right to work for gold on his farm, on condition that he compensated any diggers who might be on his property, working under the old government license.

The consequence of the promulgation of this last law has been that nearly every owner of a gold-bearing farm who could pay a year or two's concession rental for his property, has taken out a concession, with the idea of disposing of both concession and farm at a high profit in the European market, and in few cases with the intention of digging for gold. As nothing is stated in the gold concessions about the time in which the original diggers are to be compensated, or any fixed basis on which their claims are to be valued, this has almost led to a dead-lock in the gold production, and caused much litigation in the High Court at Pretoria. The diggers decline to enhance the value of any concessionaire's property by further exploring and opening it up, and the concessionaires in but few cases have the capital wherewith to compensate the diggers. As European investors, however, are not so easily influenced by a high-flown prospectus as formerly, it is probable that before long the owners of the farms bearing gold will see the propriety of again throwing them open at a rental to diggers, and thereby increasing their own revenue and that of the country generally; for, with a large mining population, both merchants and farmers find a ready sale for their goods and produce; the natives are taught to work, which is by far the most civilising influence that can be brought to bear upon them; and money will be circulated in a country where the want of it has never been felt more than at present.

There is not throughout the country what can be called a mining town, the nearest approach to one being Pilgrim's Rest, about thirty-five miles from the district of Lydenburg. This is on the property of a London firm, who appear to be sparing no expense, either in money or machinery, to test their property thoroughly. The town is situated in a most picturesque valley, reminding one more of Switzerland than South Africa; and the old fashion amongst Australians and Californians of giving odd names to places is observable here, in such names as Jerusalem Gully, Tiger Creek, &c. As usual, the Scotsman is here in force, as may be naturally expected in the most out-of-the-way place where there is a chance of making money. Indeed, one of the camps near Pilgrim's Rest is named Mac-Mac, after the number of Macs who formerly lived there; one of them, who is buried near here, being the unfortunate Mac whose strange story was related in the account of St Kilda published some years ago in this *Journal*.

The country, although very picturesque and well watered in the valleys, is very rough to travel over, and, without exception, has the worst roads traversing it in South Africa. From Lydenburg to Spitzkop, another mining camp, the road

Cham
M
wou
end
mac
bul
hav
till
Del
Lor
tha
year
and
tran
T
the
wor
of f
con
of t
fuel
Mic
road
dist
Wa
in r
her
sary
leve
The
the
own
the
con
C
the
of
brin
Spri
to
the
per
of
age
cou
alth
exc
T
mu
wh
is c
sta
mil
to
Se
per
187
of
Br
the
wi
nat
bu
con
wh
str
m
co
to
Th
con
of
sta

would make a London cab-driver's hair stand on end ; and the trouble and danger of conveying machinery along these roads by the cumbersome bullock-wagon can only be understood by those having experience of South Africa. From May till October it is possible to obtain goods from Delagoa Bay through the Portuguese port of Lorenzo Marques, the road being fairly good in that direction ; but during the remainder of the year, the dreaded tsetse fly abounds on the road, and the rivers are so swollen by the rains that transport is impossible.

Those Companies intending to start work on the gold-fields are endeavouring to arrange to work their machinery by water-power, the cost of fuel being very great here. Timber exists in considerable quantities in the kloofs or valleys of the mountains, but of a kind of little use for fuel, and almost inaccessible. Coal is found near Middleburg ; but the cost of transport along these roads would almost prevent its use, although the distance does not exceed one hundred miles. Water, apparently, will be the greatest difficulty in regard to any scheme of comprehensive working here, as for gold-working generally it is necessary to obtain a good water-supply at a high level, which is extremely difficult to obtain. There are numerous streams in the valleys ; but their sources at a high level are very few, and owing to the broken and diversified nature of the ground, would cost large sums of money to convey to any distance.

One very striking instance of perseverance in the above way is that of a miner over sixty years of age, who, unaided, has spent five years in bringing a watercourse on towards his claims at Spitzkop, and expects to take three years longer to finish it. In spite of numerous difficulties in the way of rocks and boulders, he has steadily persevered, and has now got through the worst of the work, and makes good progress, taking his age into consideration. The length of this watercourse will be about eleven miles when finished, although the distance from point to point does not exceed four.

The diggers are a wonderfully law-abiding community as a whole ; and it is astonishing to see what a slender staff under the Boer government is employed to maintain order, one solitary constable at Pilgrim's Rest being sufficient for twenty miles round. Much trouble was caused from 1876 to 1879 through the war with the native chief Secocoeni, and digging operations were almost suspended ; but his defeat by Sir Garnet Wolseley in 1879 left them free to work again until the end of 1880, when the war between the Boers and the British caused another cessation of work. All these things, together with their present troubles with the concessionaires, before alluded to, would naturally lead one to expect impatience and turbulence amongst a community many of whom come from Australian and Californian diggings, where the revolver is the readiest argument ; but, strange to say, it is not the case here.

Unless the working of the gold-fields brings more money into the country, it is very difficult to see what the future of the Transvaal will be. The late war with the native chief Mapoch has considerably impoverished the people ; the exports of the country are very trifling, and the low state of the market at the Diamond Fields has

done away with a large source of income in the sale of produce and coal. The revenue of the country has steadily fallen since the retirement of the British troops ; the natives are either unable or unwilling to pay taxes ; and the Boers themselves, with very few exceptions, wish the British were back again. Pretoria and Potchefstroom, the two principal towns, look almost deserted, and have numerous empty buildings. When we add to this the high price of living, owing to the duties imposed on goods, &c., the lookout does not seem cheerful. It is not probable that the British government will again resume its sway here, even if invited unanimously by the Boers, but it is possible that some system of Union or Confederation will before long take place amongst the different states of South Africa ; and should the railway be constructed from Delagoa Bay, *via* Pretoria, to Kimberley, it is certain that the country would benefit much by the improved means of communication. These, however, are prospects of the far future ; and until the gold-fields are further developed by the present owners, and the government capable of paying its way and seeing its course fairly before it on a firm basis, it would be unwise for intending investors to place too much faith on the representations of promoters. Gold is in the Transvaal, and in considerable quantities, but not everywhere, and as yet comparatively little real exploration has been carried on below the surface to any depth. The crushing now commencing at Pilgrim's Rest and Ross Hill will be the first real test as to the gold in the quartz, and it is to be hoped will be satisfactory to those who have had the courage to lead the way.

BY MEAD AND STREAM.

CHAPTER XVIII.—THE SEALED LETTER.

PHILIP drew his breath more freely. He experienced that delightful sense of relief which rewards one who has been long overstrained, when the strain is relaxed before the stage of exhaustion is reached. But such is the perversity of human nature, that his gladness was tinged with something resembling a degree of disappointment. Certainly the tinge was so delicate that he was not thoroughly aware of its real character. To Madge the shade was revealed in this way.

‘I wish the accident had been a little more serious,’ he said.

She opened her eyes in astonishment. ‘What a wicked wish,’ was her reproachful comment.

‘We have made such a fuss about my going,’ he went on, turning things over in his mind, ‘that we shall look ridiculous to everybody when it becomes known that a stupid tumble off a horse has stopped me.’

‘I think we should only be ridiculous if we minded the foolish people who thought us so,’ she answered very wisely.

‘Ah, you never heard the story of the curate who in a moment of enthusiasm declared his intention of making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.’

‘What about him?’

"What about him?" The poor beggar was so worried by everybody he met afterwards asking in surprise how he had managed to get back from Jerusalem so soon—then why he hadn't gone—when he was going—and looking as if he had perpetrated a fraud—that he was forced to make the pilgrimage in order to escape being called a humbug.

"But you are not a curate, and—I don't think you are a humbug, Philip," she said with a twinkle of fun in her eyes.

"I hope not," he rejoined, laughing. "But what can have induced Uncle Shield to change all his plans so suddenly?"

That question was a source of much marvel to them both. During the afternoon, an idea occurred to Madge, which seemed so extravagant, that at first she only smiled at it, as one smiles at the revelation of some pretty but absurd dream.

This was the idea: that in some way this sudden change of plans by Mr Shield was associated with her and the memory of her mother. She was nearer the truth than she imagined, although the more she thought over it, the more she was impressed by the possibility of the surmise finding some foundation in the motives which actuated Mr Shield's present conduct.

She did not, however, think the surmise of sufficient importance to speak about yet; but she asked Aunt Hussy to tell Philip on the first opportune occasion about her mother and his uncle. Philip ought to know about it, whether or not there was anything in her fanciful idea.

Aunt Hussy, with a little smile of approval, gave the promise, and, passing her hand affectionately over the girl's head, added: "Thou'll be a happy woman, dearie; and bring peace to sore troubled breasts. There never was ill but good lay behind it, if we would only seek and find it. That's an old saying; but there's a deal of comfort in most old sayings. Seems to me as if they were the cries of folk that had proved them through suffering."

"What did Mr Shield say in his letter to you, aunt?"

The dame shook her head, and although still smiling, looked as she felt, awkward.

"I am not to tell thee—anyway, not now. By-and-by, when I come to understand it myself, I will tell thee; but do not thou ask again until I speak. It will be best."

And Madge knew that whatever Aunt Hussy chose to do—whether to speak or be silent—would be best. So she said simply: "Very well, aunt."

"I am going into the oak room to wrestle with the spirit, as my father used to say when he wanted to be left quite by himself. I want to be quite by myself till I get the right end of this riddle. I have been trying it two or three times since you went out, but the answer has not come

yet. I am to try again. Be not you afraid, though I do not come out till tea-time."

She spoke as if amused at herself; but when she had closed the door of the oak room and seated herself in a big armchair beside one of the gaunt windows, the smile faded from her kindly face, and her expression became one of mingled sadness and perplexity.

But everything Dame Crawshay had to do was done sedately—with that perfect composure which can be obtained only by a mind at rest with itself and innocent of all evil intention. She put on her spectacles, and quietly took from her pocket the two letters she had received from Mr Shield. One was open, and she had studied it many times that day, for it presented the riddle she had not yet been able to solve: the other, which had been inclosed in the first, was still unopened.

She settled herself down to make one more effort to find the right thing to do.

"Dear Friend," said the open letter, "in telling me that I have still a kindly place in your memory, you have given me a pleasure which I am glad to have lived long enough to experience. Thank you. And I ask you to take this "Thank you" in its full sense of respect and gratitude.

"I knew that—here there was a word scored out, but the dame deciphered it to be 'Lucy'—she had left a daughter under your care. I have thought of her—very often thought of her; and wished that it might be in my power to serve her as I would have served her mother, had I known of her misfortunes in time. But whenever I thought of writing to you about her, my pen was stopped by the same strange stupor—paralysis or whatever it may be that affects my brains whenever certain memories are stirred—the same which rendered me dumb and incapable of listening to you, when you might have given me explanations that would no doubt have made my suffering less. I do not ask for explanations now; perhaps it would be best to give me none. I am sure it would be best; and yet I have a longing to know anything you may have to tell me about Lucy. Time has taken the sting from memory: there is no bitterness in my thought of her—I do not think there ever was any bitterness in my thoughts about her. Looking back, I only see the bright days when we were so happy together, dreaming of our future. Then there is the black day when you told me she was married. Somebody died that day—my better self, I always think. Since then, I seem to have been toiling through a long tunnel, so numbed with cold and sunk in darkness that I have felt nothing and seen nothing."

"But the information contained in your note about the intended marriage of Lucy's child to Philip Hadleigh has brought me back into the daylight. The change was so sudden, that for a little while my eyes were dazzled and my mind confused. I see clearly now. Here is my opportunity to serve Lucy. There can be nothing you can tell me which can affect my craving to serve her; and I can only do it by guarding her daughter. I proceed to England by the next steamer which leaves the nearest port."

"I am aware that you will find it difficult to understand me from what I have written here. I have tried to make my purpose plain to you

in the packet which is inclosed with this; but what is put down there is for the present intended only for you. Before you break the seal, I ask you, in Lucy's name, to keep my confidence from your niece, and even from your husband, until we meet. Should this be asking too much, I beseech you to put the packet into the fire without opening it. Let me assure you at once that in withholding my purpose for a time from others, you will in nowise harm—or even run the risk of harming the living or the dead, whilst you may be able to assist me greatly in the service I wish to do for your sister's child.

'Decide as you will: I trust you shall be satisfied that the grounds for your decision are as sufficient as mine are for the course I have adopted.'

Here was the question she found it so difficult to answer: could she accept this trust? It was contrary to all her notions of right that she should have any thought which she might not communicate to her husband. She had never had a secret; her life had run so smoothly that there had been no occasion for one. She was grateful for having been spared the temptations to falsehood, which a secret, however trifling in itself, entails. But she took no special credit to herself on this account. Indeed, the good woman found it hard to understand why there should be any mysteries in the conduct of people at all. The straightforward course appeared to her so much easier to travel than the crooked ways which some choose or fall into unawares, that she wondered why, on purely selfish grounds, they should continue in them, when the way out was so simple.

At this moment her theory was put to a severe test. She was asked to keep a secret, but it was not her own or of her seeking. Then she should refuse to accept the trust. On the other hand, she was assured by one in whose honesty she had every reason to place implicit faith, that the secret meant no harm to any one—that she was only required to keep it for a time, and that by so doing she would aid him in carrying into effect his design for the welfare of Madge.

She took a practical view of the mode in which he proposed to benefit the child of the woman he had loved long ago. He was rich, he was childless: of course his purpose must be to make her his heiress. Then why should he make such a mystery of such a generous act? She had heard of people who took the drollest possible way of bequeathing their fortunes. Maybe it amused them: maybe they were a little wrong in the head, and were therefore to be pitied. Why, then, should she not humour him, by letting him have his own way so long as it was harmless, as she would do with any person whose eccentricity could not be agreeably dealt with otherwise? This was coming nearer to a settlement of her doubts.

Now she could either burn the sealed letter, or send it to him at his lawyer's, whose address he gave her for further communications. But the argument was in favour of opening it; and what lingering hesitation she might have on the subject was decided by that strain of curiosity which the best of women have inherited.

She deliberately cut the envelope with her scissors and unfolded the paper on her lap. The contents were somewhat of the nature she expected;

but the way in which he purposed benefiting Madge was different from anything she could have guessed.

'Although events which in the first hours of their occurrence appeared to be too hard for me to live through have become in time only sad memories, flitting at intervals across my mind without causing pain or interfering with my ordinary ways, your letter has brought me so close to the old times, that I seem to be living in them again. The old interests—the old passions are as strong upon me at this moment as they were when I still possessed the greatest of all fortunes—Youth and Hope.'

'Even when I knew that *she* was lost to me, there remained the prospect that some day she might need my help, and I should find consolation in giving it. Her death took that comfort from me, and I settled down to the dull business of living without a purpose. Luck, not labour, brought me *money*—that is why I am indifferent to it. This was how it came.'

'You remember the old hawthorn tree in your father's garden, where so many glad hours were spent with Lucy? Well, on a green patch of this land which I was lazily farming here was an old hawthorn tree, and associating it with the one which had such deep root in my memory, it became my favourite resting-place. I made a seat beneath it as like the old one as possible, and there I used to sit reading or thinking of the dead man who was my former self. Under this tree I found a diamond: it was the first of many. But you have read about the diamond fields—and now you know the source of my wealth.'

'My intention has been from the first that Lucy's daughter should benefit by my luck. I could not feel, and you could not expect me to feel, much active interest in her childhood, knowing that she was under your protection, and therefore well cared for. Your information that she is engaged to marry Philip Hadleigh has roused me from a long sleep. I have formed a good opinion of the young man from his letters. I purposed having him here with me for a year or so, in order to judge of his character before deciding in what manner I should best fulfil the promise given to my sister, to do what I could for him in the future. The fact that you and your husband regard him with so much favour as to give your niece to him, would be in the case of another a sufficient guarantee that he is worthy of all trust.'

'But he is *Lloyd Hadleigh's son*.

'What that means to me, I do not care to explain, and it is unnecessary to do so. It is sufficient to tell you that it compels me to make him *prove* that he is worthy of trust—above all, that he is worthy of Madge Heathcote.'

'I intended to judge of him by observing his ways during his stay with me. Now I intend to put him to the severest test of human nature—the test of what is called Good Fortune.'

'You love your niece. You cannot trust the man if you object to let him prove his worth.'

AUSTIN SHIELD.'

CHAPTER XIX.—THE FIRST INTERVIEW.

A few days had passed when Philip startled little Dr Joy with the information that he

had walked two miles and felt equal to two more.

'But you must not try it, though,' said the doctor quickly; 'you are a strong fellow, but you must not be in too great a hurry to prove it. We must be economical of our strength, you know, as well as of everything else. You are getting on nicely—very nicely and with wonderful rapidity. Don't spoil it all by too much eagerness.'

'Don't be afraid—I'll take care.'

The afternoon post brought him a note from Mr Shield, announcing his arrival at the *Langham Hotel*, and inquiring if he felt strong enough to call there next day at eleven.

'I am quite strong enough to be with you at the time mentioned,' was Philip's prompt reply; and he kept the engagement punctually.

Being expected, he was conducted immediately to the sitting-room of one of the finest suites of apartments on the first floor. Evidently Mr Shield had an idea of taking advantage of all the comforts of the old country, to make up for whatever inconveniences he had submitted to in his colonial life.

Standing at one of the windows was a big brawny man, dressed in dark-brown tweed. He turned as Philip entered, and showed a face covered with thick, shaggy hair, which had been black, but was now plentifully streaked with silver. Of his features, only the eyes and nose were distinguishable, for the shaggy hair fell over his brow, too, in defiance of combs and brushes.

Philip's idea of Mr Shield's appearance had been vague enough; but somehow this man was so unlike every preconceived notion of him, that he would have fancied there was a mistake, had not all doubt been at once removed by the greeting he received.

'How do you do, Philip? Glad to see you.'

He held out a big horny hand, which betokened a long friendship with pickaxe and spade. His manner was somewhat rough, but it was frank and good-natured. Still it was unlike the manner of one who had received some education and had been accustomed to move in ordinary society. All this, however, Philip quickly accounted for by recalling the fact, that Mr Shield had been living so many years on the outskirts of civilisation, that he must have forgotten much, and unconsciously adopted some of the characteristics of his uncouth associates.

'I am glad to see you at last, sir,' he said, grasping the extended hand cordially.

'That's right. I like a man who can give you a grip when he does shake hands. If he can't, he ought to leave it alone. I don't bother much with hand-shaking. A nod's as good in our part. But coming so far, you see—Oh, all right! (the last phrase was like a private exclamation, as he suddenly remembered something). . . . Sit down. Have anything?'

'No; thank you.'

'Ah, right, right. Under orders, I suppose. Forgot your accident. How's the ribs?'

'Pretty well, I am happy to say,' answered Philip, smiling at the droll, gruff, abrupt style of his uncle, and appreciating the kindness which was clearly visible through it. 'The doctors tell me I shall never know that the accident happened.'

'That's good. Now you know what we are not to speak about, and what we are to speak about is yourself.'

'That is generally an agreeable subject.'

'Should be always to a youngster like you. Now, I want to start you in life. That was my promise, and I am able to keep it. What is your notion of a start?'

'I have not decided yet. The result of my journey to you was to settle what was to follow. As that journey is now unnecessary, I think of entering for the bar or medicine.'

'Stuff. Too many lawyers and doctors already. You keep in mind who it was wished you to come to me? . . . You needn't speak—I see you do. Then will you obey her, and become my partner?'

'Your partner!' ejaculated Philip, astounded by the abruptness of this extraordinary proposal.

'Don't you like the notion? Most young fellows would snap at it.'

'I am aware of that, Mr Shield; but I have no capital except what my fa—'

'That's all right. You go to Hawkins and Jackson. They will satisfy you that you have plenty of capital, and will explain to you that there is a chance for you to become one of the biggest men in London—M.P.—Lord Mayor—anything you like, if you only enter into partnership with me.'

'I am a little bewildered, sir, and would like to understand exactly.'

'Hawkins is waiting for you,' said Mr Shield, looking at his watch; 'he will make everything plain to you before you leave him. He has full orders—instructions, that is to say. I have somebody else to see now. You'll write and tell me how you take to the plan, and I'll let you know when we are to meet again.'

'I ought to thank you; but—'

'Don't bother about that—time enough for it—time enough. Good-bye.'

The interview was over. Philip was metaphorically hustled out of the room by the brusque, good-natured relative he had just found. He felt confused and bewildered as he walked slowly down Regent Street, trying to realise the meaning of all the suggestions which had been made to him. There was something humorous, too, in having a fortune thrust upon him in this singular fashion. For he knew that to become the partner of Austin Shield was equivalent to inheriting a large fortune.

In their correspondence of course, Mr Shield had told him that he meant to 'see what could be done for him'; but he had added that everything would depend upon how they got on together, after they had lived for a time under the same roof. Now everything was given to him when they had been only a few minutes together—indeed had been given before they met at all, for all arrangements in reference to the partnership had been already made, and only awaited his acceptance.

'He is an odder fish in person than he has shown himself in his letters,' thought Philip. 'We'll see what Hawkins says.'

He took a cab, and as he was driving to the office of the solicitors, his thoughts cleared. There

was him upon arra

A

Our
rec
a s
inte
ele
esta
stron
high
sec
tha
a ju
men
isat
im
inst
Ab
tut
and
tion
of
plis
the
illu
may

T
wh
but
in
cert
and
boy
not
to
dis
till
val
in
now
tho
dre
nor
of
par
one
and
Fre
can

T
Act
and
the
und
and
the
of
tur
Ma
Na
was
the
lis

was no doubt that the prospect so freely offered him was a brilliant one ; but there was a cloud upon it. How would his father regard this arrangement ?

A PRACTICAL SCIENCE AND ART SCHOOL

GORDON'S COLLEGE, ABERDEEN.

OUR Minister for Education, Mr Mundella, in a recent visit to Glasgow and Edinburgh, delivered a series of speeches remarkable not only for the interesting accounts he gave of the progress of elementary education under the national system established by the Education Acts, but for their strong advocacy of the necessity of providing still higher and more useful education by means of secondary and technical schools. He indicated that this might in some measure be attained by a judicious reform of existing educational endowments, and he instanced one case of such reorganisation, which he held up as a model worthy of imitation. The case referred to was that of the institution now known as Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen. The 'reform' achieved by this institution has been so thorough and so successful, and has been conducted so much in the direction indicated by Mr Mundella, that some details of its nature and the work now being accomplished by its agency may prove interesting in themselves, and advantageous as furnishing an illustration of how our general educational system may be improved and perfected.

The institution was founded by a Robert Gordon, who had been at one time a merchant in Danzig, but ultimately settled in Aberdeen, where he died in 1731. He bequeathed all his property to certain trustees, for the building of a hospital, and for the maintenance and education of young boys whose parents were poor and indigent, and not able to maintain them at school or put them to trades and employments. Owing to the civil disorders of the time, the hospital was not opened till 1750. The trust funds, together with the value and revenue of a separate estate bequeathed in 1816 by a Mr Alexander Simpson of Collyhill, now amount to an annual revenue of over eight thousand pounds. There were latterly two hundred boys in the hospital, forty of these being nominated by the Collyhill trustees. The period of residence was five years ; the education imparted was a fairly good, sound, elementary one, with a little instruction in mathematics and chemistry, and a smattering of Latin and French. The bulk of the boys drifted into mercantile pursuits.

The passing of the Educational Endowments Act of 1878 opened up for the institution a new and wider sphere of usefulness. In June 1881, the governing body obtained a Provisional Order under the Act, greatly altering the constitution and objects of the original trust, and constituting the hospital a College, in which the chief subjects of study shall be English Language and Literature, History and Geography, Modern Languages, Mathematics, and the Elements of Physical and Natural Science. The number of founders was reduced to one hundred and twenty, and the 'hospital' system was almost entirely abolished. The hospital buildings were converted

into a day school ; the standard of education was raised ; evening classes were established ; and provision was made for the amalgamation with the College of any mechanics' institute, scientific or technical school, or other educational institution.

The College, therefore, as now constituted consists of a day school and an evening school. It is not necessary for our purposes to detail the work of the day school in the junior department ; but in the senior, the work branches off into three divisions, the studies being specialised with a regard to the line of work the boys intend pursuing on leaving school. In the Commercial School prominent attention is given to modern languages (French and German), mathematics, arithmetic, book-keeping, and letter and précis writing, the studies in science being also continued. In the Trade and Engineering School the studies carried forward are English and one foreign language (French or German) ; but most of the time is devoted to mathematics, experimental science, and drawing ; applied science and technical drawing being the features of the second year. The teaching in both years is accompanied by systematic instruction in the workshop (in wood and iron) ; while for intending young engineers there is a special course in steam and the steam-engine ; and for those aiming at the building trades, a special course in building construction and drawing. The workshop, which is under the superintendence of a practical man, is large and well equipped. It has thirteen benches and a lathe, and a forge and three vice-benches ; and a proposal is about to be submitted to the governing body for the further development of this practical department by providing a steam-engine and other appliances. The third division of the school —the Classical—is for boys intending to proceed to the university.

At the present time, there are five hundred and eighty day scholars, one hundred and twenty of whom are founders. Ninety day scholars are receiving instruction in the workshop in relays of fifteen at a time, one hour being devoted to the workshop, and four hours to ordinary teaching. The school-hours are five per day, and most of the school-work is done in that time, the pupils, though not altogether exempt from home-work, not being oppressed by it. Plenty of time is thus given for exercise and enjoyment ; and there is no complaint of 'over-pressure,' either on the part of teachers or taught.

The evening school, which is open to adults, and to girls as well as to boys, is divided into two sections. There is a General and Commercial section, in which instruction is given in such subjects as English, arithmetic, French, German, theory of music, phonography, and political economy. Then there is a Science and Technology section, having classes for practical plane and solid geometry, machine and building construction and drawing, applied mechanics and steam, metal working tools, carpentry and joinery, magnetism and electricity, electrical engineering, inorganic chemistry, and botany. To the Physics and Chemistry lecture-rooms are attached a large apparatus-room and commodious laboratories ; and the means and appliances are enlarged from time to time, one hundred pounds being devoted this year to the purchase of scientific apparatus and chemicals. In the Applied Mechanics class, the

strength of materials and the strains in structures are investigated experimentally; while the class meets occasionally on Saturday afternoons for experiments in practical mechanics in the laboratory, or to study the actual applications of mechanics in some of the engineering works in the town.

The classes in the Science section are specially adapted for students qualifying for the examinations of the Science and Art Department and of the Society of Arts, and for the City and Guilds of London examinations in Technology; and the College—under the able direction of the headmaster, the Rev. Alexander Ogilvie, LL.D.—is now beginning to take a high position in connection with these examinations. Dr Ogilvie first instituted Science and Art classes in Gordon's Hospital in 1875, not only for boys in the hospital, but also for those who had completed their education there and were serving apprenticeships in Aberdeen. The beginnings were small, classes for magnetism and electricity and physical geography being first started. In course of time, however, botany was added, followed by mathematics, theoretical mechanics, and inorganic chemistry; and soon half-a-dozen classes were in full swing, yielding by-and-by very satisfactory results, all the more satisfactory as teaching in these special subjects was given out of school-hours, or, as the inspector reported, 'Science has taken its place in the institution, and has displaced nothing.'

The reorganisation of the College, which came into practical operation in August 1881, gave a new impetus to the evening classes and the science teaching. During session 1881-82, two hundred and four scholars attended the evening classes, of whom one hundred and seventy-one presented themselves at the examinations of the Science and Art Department. Of these, sixty-nine gained eighty-eight Queen's prizes, value twenty-eight pounds ten shillings, and first-class certificates; eighty-seven gained second-class certificates; and fifteen failed. The total Department (government) grants that fell to the teachers amounted to three hundred and forty-six pounds ten shillings. In session 1882-83, the number of tickets issued for the evening classes was—for General and Commercial classes, six hundred and eighty-two; for Science classes, five hundred and eighty-seven: total, twelve hundred and sixty-nine. Of this number, three hundred and eighty-one individual students attended the Science classes, of whom two hundred and thirty-five were present at the examinations. Ninety of these gained one hundred and twenty-two Queen's prizes, of the value of thirty-nine pounds five shillings, with first-class certificates; one hundred and four gained second-class certificates; and forty-one failed. The grants earned from the Department amounted to three hundred and sixty-five pounds. In the Society of Arts' examinations, sixty-nine candidates were examined—the largest number from any institution, except the Birmingham and Midland Institute—and fifty-three passed, four gaining first-class certificates, and twenty second-class certificates. In the City and Guilds' examination, the number presented in technology—metal working tools—was eight, of whom two gained first-class honours, five stood first-class in the ordinary grade, and one second-class. One student so distinguished himself, being

second in the examination of all the candidates in the United Kingdom, that he was awarded a prize of three pounds and a bronze medal.

Within the past year, the Science teaching in the College has been largely developed by a provisional amalgamation with the Aberdeen Mechanics' Institution, in connection with which there has been for many years a School of Art and Science classes. The Science classes and the scientific apparatus of the Mechanics' Institution have been transferred to the College, which has become thereby the Science school for the city. The amalgamation—almost certain to be permanently ratified—coupled with the more complete and systematic instruction in Gordon's College, promises to be fruitful of good results, which may, indeed, be already anticipated, for no fewer than fifteen hundred and forty-seven students have enrolled themselves in the various evening classes for the current session.

The value of the work which the College is accomplishing can hardly be over-estimated. The objects of the institution, as now recast, are—in addition to the education of foundationers—to afford a good elementary education at fees so small as to make it within the reach of the sons of working-men even; to help its own scholars, and boys leaving Board Schools, to a knowledge of subjects not otherwise readily attainable; and to furnish to the apprentice and the artisan instruction in science and technology of a higher grade. The College, in short, aims at being a complete and efficient secondary school, and really forms for the city of Aberdeen the much-desiderated link between elementary and university education—a link that will be more apparent and more serviceable when the universities come to be reformed, and when more attention will likely be paid to scientific than to classical studies. Even as things are, a number of the scholars have already found their way to the university, and have been successful in gaining bursaries and other honours; and two of them—educated partly in the Hospital and partly in the College—have recently passed the competitions for the Indian Civil Service without the preliminary 'coaching' in London, generally regarded as essential. One of the two is now in receipt of one hundred and fifty pounds a year during his two years of probation, after which he will become one of Her Majesty's civil servants in India. The Commercial School provides an education well suited for young men who intend engaging in the various occupations and industries of the town and district; while in the evening classes they have every opportunity of continuing their studies as their inclinations or their pursuits dictate.

But the most important work of the College is the scientific and technical education it imparts. The object here is to furnish in the day school such an elementary practical knowledge as will prepare boys to become intelligent apprentices; in the evening school, on the other hand, to furnish higher theoretical instruction to boys and men really at work. The workshop is for the use of day scholars only; the evening pupils find their practical training in their daily work, and come to the College to learn the theory. The day school aims at teaching the pupils on

the technical side the elements of the constructive arts and the character of materials, concurrently with thorough education in the interpretation of working drawings. It is explicitly intimated that 'it is by no means intended that a boy should learn his trade in the College, but only that he should lay the foundation of the scientific and technical knowledge which has become an essential concomitant of trade experience and manual dexterity.' This distinction has to be borne in mind ; for Gordon's College is not an 'apprenticeship school,' such, for instance, as the one maintained by the Paris municipality in the Boulevard de la Villette, which turns out its pupils, at the end of a three years' course, as having finished their apprenticeship, and as being ready for employment as journeymen, or even as foremen. The fault of this system of training artisans is that it underrates what is to be learned in the ordinary workshop ; and instead of having recourse to it, the governing body of Gordon's College set to work on the lines just mentioned.

It is obviously impossible as yet to discern the effect which this improved technical education will have upon the arts and industries of the town ; but some estimate of the actual work accomplished may be formed from the following account of models exhibited at the last distribution of prizes, which we take from a local paper :

'A large number of drawings by the pupils attracted much attention, and a special feature was an exhibition of models executed in the workshop in the course of the year. These models were the work of the pupils, and an examination showed that they were highly finished, and that in every instance the greatest care had been taken, down even to the most minute detail. The models were large in number, and diverse in character. One was a very fine sample of a suspension bridge, measuring twelve feet in length, and weighted so as to show the strain it was capable of sustaining. There was also what is known as a roof-truss, an arrangement for finding what, under given circumstances, would be the strain put upon the rafters and the rods. Then there was a model crane adjusted for a precisely similar purpose, and very neatly finished apparatus for experimenting with the inclined plane, the lever, and friction coil, &c. A number of well-finished specimens of electrical apparatus formed part of the exhibits, including one or two very good galvanometers and a small electrical engine. In woodwork the variety was large. A walking-stick was shown which on occasion could be transformed into a tripod stand for surveying. There were also models of the various jointings employed in woodwork, and several excellent specimens of work both in wood and iron. Possibly the most striking feature of the whole display was a sectional model of a steam-engine, which measured some thirteen feet in length and showed all the working parts. It was also provided with means of adjustment to find by experiment the effect of varying the dimensions of the various parts. The entire model was coloured in accordance with the ordinary rule in engineering works. Among the ordinary articles shown were a grindstone frame, a vice-bench, and a number of smithy tools. It may be mentioned that the whole of the work in

connection with the models was not only executed by the boys themselves, but that in every case they had also prepared the working drawings.'

It is not too much to infer that elementary instruction which produces such results as these will prove an important factor in the work of after-life ; and we may safely conclude that the College is not unlikely to realise a large measure of the success which it deserves, besides serving as an example to other scholastic and commercial communities.

THE MINER'S PARTNER.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CONCLUSION.

NEVER before had Ben from mental excitement passed a sleepless night ; his seasoned, iron nerves had borne him through a multitude of perils—from hostile Indians, from white enemies ; from the bear, the wolf, the snake ; from fire and flood ; and when the time had come for him to sleep, he slept soundly ; when his rough meals were prepared, he ate well. But it was different now. The recollection of the face which confronted his own at the restaurant, haunted him, broke his sleep into fitful dozing, and filled these unrefreshing snatches with terrible dreams. Yet, when the bright morning came, he persuaded himself that he must have been mistaken—that he had exaggerated some chance resemblance into the identity of his dead partner.

Ben's reflections touched upon what was growing into another dreadful form of mental excitement. He began to fear that he had not seen the man at all, that it was merely a delusion, a vision of the brain. And that such a delusion should take the form of Rube Steele was not surprising, bearing in mind the fact, which was never long absent from his thoughts, that he had given this man a blow which, if it had not, as he formerly supposed, caused the man's death, must have very nearly done so. No doubt the blow was struck in self-defence ; but even murder in self-defence is not a thing which a man can in his calmer moments recall without some sense of remorse.

He was early at the hotel, and taking his regular seat, waited with a nervous anxiety, such as he had rarely experienced before, the appearance of the stranger. He had not long to wait. Almost as soon as he was seated, a figure entered the saloon which there was no mistaking, and all Ben's consolatory theories as to a casual resemblance deceiving him, fled on the instant. The stoop of the long body and neck, the crafty glance the man threw around on entering, his very step—these were all Rube Steele's ; and to the dismay of Ben, the new-comer evidently glanced round the saloon in search of him, for the moment he saw him, his face lighted up with a smile, and he came to the table.

'Glad to see you again !' said he, extending a hand which a horrible fascination compelled Ben to seize and shake ; but the familiarity of the touch was more horrible still. He felt—he knew for a certainty, he had touched that hand a thousand times.

'I thought mebbe you made this your regular dining location,' continued the other ; 'and I have kinder taken a fancy to you.'

'In-deed!' gasped Ben, wondering as to what would come next.

'Yes, I have; that is so,' replied the stranger. 'I reckon you have not been located in this city very long?'

'Not very long,' said Ben, who had not once removed his eyes from the other's face. 'I came from the West—from the mining country.'

'Possible!' ejaculated the stranger. 'Wal, now, I take a great interest in the mining countries, and like to hear tell of them. Were you from California, or Nevady, or—'

'From Colorado,' gasped Ben, who almost began to fancy that he was losing his senses, so certain was he that the man was Rube, and yet so inconsistent with this belief was the whole of his conversation, especially his liking for Ben, and his anxiety to hear of the mines.

When they separated, it was with another shake of the hand, and a strongly expressed hope on the part of the stranger that they might meet again the next day. 'Either the critter is a ghost,' thought Ben—'and in that case there are ghosts—or I am going crazy; or he is Rube Steele; and I know that is impossible. I won't go to this hotel any more; and soon as we get married, Ruth and I will live out of the city, and that is a comfort.'

Fortified by this reflection, he was able to bear up somewhat better on this day, and to accept Mr Showle's invitation with a calmer mind. He arrived early at the merchant's house. Ruth came in soon afterwards, and he was pleased to see that she, too, looked more cheerful. Ruth had relieved her mind, as she confessed to Ben, by telling him her trouble; and now he knew it, she felt that the worst was over. It was to avoid her half-brother, she owned, that she had wished Ben to live so far from town, and as he had now really arrived, he was glad they had agreed upon this precaution.

They were conversing cheerfully enough, when a knock was heard at the outer door, and Mr Showle, rising, exclaimed: 'There is Morede! I know his knock. Indeed, he takes care we shall hear him—I am sure you will like him, Creelock, and he is very anxious to see you.—Ah! Mr Morede! you are punctual, then! Come in, and let me introduce you to our friend Creelock.' Saying this, he shook hands with the new arrival, and led him to where Ben was standing.

'I think,' said Mr Morede, as he took Ben's hand with a smile, 'I am not entirely a stranger to Mr Creelock. I have had the pleasure of dining with him more than once at the *Ocean House*.'

Yes, he had; of course he had. Of course he was not a stranger to Ben—far from it, and Ben knew it well; for here was his mysterious companion at dinner, the new partner in Showle and Bynnes, and Ruth's half-brother, all turning out to be not only one and the same person, but were also each and every one Rube Steele, his treacherous partner, whom he had left for dead in Colorado! And why did he not recognise Ben, as Ben had recognised him? Of all the strange features in this bewildering matter, this was the strongest.

Ben shook hands, as an automaton might have done, and spoke as though in a trance; the odd tone and character of his replies, and his fixed

stare, evidently attracting the notice of Ruth and Mr Showle.

'Come, Creelock!' cried the latter presently; 'you are not yourself to-night. Where are your mining stories and your prairie adventures? I have been praising you all the time to our friend Morede here, as a sort of live volume of entertainment on these matters, and you are not saying a word about them.'

'Mr Showle is entirely right; he is so,' said Morede; 'and I reckon I shall be quite pleased to sit around and hear somethin' about the western mines. I always do like to hear tell of them.'

'Do you?' exclaimed Ben, rousing himself in a species of desperation, and resolving to bring this horrible torture to a finish. 'Shall I tell you an adventure of my own?'

'Just so,' returned Morede, with a pleased smile. 'I should like it above all things.'

'Then,' said Ben—and his answering smile was of a somewhat grimmer character, in spite of himself, than Morede's had been—'then I will tell you how my pardner at the mines introduced a stranger, who robbed me of fifteen hundred dollars. This stranger came, I should tell you, with information about Indians on the war-path who were likely to be around our camp. But it was an arranged plot. He was a mean cuss, this stranger; he or his friends robbed the placers and broke the stamp-mill. It was either him or my pardner that shot at me from a gully; and the bullet went through my hat and cut away some of my hair. That was not the only time my pardner got his desperadoes to shoot at me; so I will tell you about him.'

Thereupon, stimulated by the desperate impulse we have alluded to, Ben proceeded to relate a part of the plot which had been devised for his ruin by his crafty partner; the incidents attendant on which greatly excited, and sometimes almost appalled his hearers, none among whom listened with more palpable interest than did Mr Morede. Ben told all, up to the action of the Vigilantes, but could not bring himself to speak of the final scene at the pool; there was something too horrible in the idea of describing that to his listeners. When Ben had finished, which he did by saying, 'What do you think of that, Mr Morede?' and looking his new partner straight in the face, the latter exclaimed, in what seemed the most genuine manner possible: 'First-rate, Mr Creelock! I admire you. I see you have the real grit; and I wish I had been there to help you in such a fix. But, to my thinking, your partner was the worse of the two.'

'He was,' said Ben drily.

'And he ought to have had his reward,' continued Morede.

'He had it,' said Ben, with increased dryness.

'Good! Good!' cried Morede; and other comments being made, the conversation became general.

Morede bore his part all through the evening without a single allusion which could induce Ben to suppose he had the slightest remembrance of him, or had ever before heard a syllable relating to the dangerous stranger or the robberies. When they parted for the night, too, he was particularly demonstrative in his friendliness to Creelock, making quite a 'smart oration,' as Mr Showle

afterwards remarked, on the agreeable evening he had passed, and the pleasure it would give him to be associated in business, and as he hoped, in still closer relationship with a man whom he admired and liked so much at first sight as he did Mr Creelock. Ben went home after this speech in doubt as to whether it was himself or every one around him that was going mad.

Day after day passed, and the new partners in the firm met frequently, with no diminution in the friendship which Mr Morede had from the first professed for Ben. They did not meet at the hotel, however; the strain on Ben's nerves was bad enough when they met as part of a group. A *tête-à-tête* was more than he could stand with a man whom he believed to have killed, but who was now walking about as unconcernedly as though he had never been stretched by the side of that Colorado pool.

So confounded had Ben been by the apparition, that he had never thought of asking the Christian name of Mr Morede, and it came upon him as a new shock when he received a note from the warehouse on some business matters signed 'Reuben Morede,' while he could have sworn to the handwriting in a court of justice. This did not increase his certainty, for it could admit of no increase; he was certain, and could not go beyond that; but it seemed to make the position more dreadful and complicated. Now and then, too, he would find, if he turned quickly round, Mr Morede gazing fixedly upon him—an earnest gaze, as though he were striving to recall something to his memory; and this was not agreeable to Creelock.

He asked Ruth, as guardedly as possible, about her brother's past career; but she knew nothing of it since he had left home. He had gone West, she knew; but he would not now utter a syllable in explanation, or even say how he had been employed. Ben could not press her very much upon the subject, as it was evidently a painful one. His departure from home had been caused by some disgraceful, possibly fatal broil—that was clear; so Ben forbore to question her.

The day of his wedding drew nigh. Ruth had left her school; their home was so far advanced in its improvements that it would be quite ready by the time they returned from their trip; and then—to add still greater pleasure and éclat to the festivities—the gallant energetic old gentleman Mr Bynnes paid a short visit to Cincinnati. Like the restless Yankee he was, he had already sold his new estate at a very considerable profit; so was now, at seventy years of age, looking out for some fresh investment for his dollars, and employment for his time. He had seen Ben before leaving Cincinnati, and appeared to like him then; and seeing him a little more at leisure now, he liked him more. The bluff, straightforward, perhaps rough manner, which Creelock could never shake off, seemed to please the old man mightily, and he was never so happy as when in his company. Ben, with his nightmare always oppressing him, had asked a little about Reuben Morede, who he knew was a connection of Mr Bynnes. But the latter was not communicative about the new partner, although there was a tantalising hesitation in his manner, which made Ben think he could a tale unfold, did he choose.

Well, the wedding-day came; and the simple ceremony performed in Mr Showle's drawing-room, made Ben and Ruth man and wife. Then came what answers to the wedding-breakfast of the Britisher, and this was on a scale, for variety and display, to put the old country on its mettle, although it was only given by an American storekeeper. After the first part of the feast was over, Mr Bynnes got Ben by himself and insisted upon having a final glass of champagne with him. 'I know you have got just the best wife in the States,' said the old gentleman; 'and you are the kind of man to make a good husband, I can see. I feel as glad to see little Ruth Alken happily settled, as if she was a gal of my own—I do. After all these years, too, to think her brother is going to clear up and quit his tricks! I always liked the boy; but he has had some real bad ways. You asked me about him, you know.'

'Yes, I did,' said Ben.

'Wal, I did not like to let out agen him,' pursued Mr Bynnes; 'but it can't do harm now anyway, that I can see. He has been mining in Colorado, and has been up to some queer tricks there. He was nigh killed by his partner—he was; that is so.'

'Nearly killed!' echoed Ben.

'Ah! most uncommon nigh,' said Mr Bynnes. 'Also he was nigh upon lynched by the Vigilantes. His partner found out that he was—Rube was, I mean—playing him false, planning to rob and perhaps murder him; so it is supposed from the mark on his head that he hit him down with some blunt instrument, possibly a club, and left him for dead at the mine. He was found lying by some of the miners, who carried him to Flume City, and I heard all about it from the doctor who attended him. It is a real extraordinary case. He recovered, as you see; but his memory from a certain time has entirely gone. His boyish days he remembers quite well; but does not appear to have the least idea that he ever went to the mines or was ever injured. We have tried him in every way; but his mind is a perfect blank. Strange, is it not?'

'Very strange,' assented Ben, who, we need hardly say, was listening with breathless interest.

'His brain is injured, no doubt,' continued the elder; 'for his skull was fractured. The doctor says it is to be hoped that he will never recover his memory; for if he does, he will probably go mad, and do some more mischief before he dies. It is a strange case.—Here we are! just having a friendly drink at parting.' This was in reply to one or two of the party who came to interrupt the lengthened gossip, and the conference was broken up.

Often, during his eastern trip, did Ben recur to the strange story he had heard, and often did he debate with himself whether or not he should tell his wife what he had learned; but he thought it better on the whole to be silent. It was with a great feeling of relief, however, that he found, upon his return to Cincinnati, that Morede was absent, having just left to accompany Mr Bynnes in his inspection of a property in Colorado.

In about a week after this time, Mr Showle received a letter from Mr Bynnes announcing the almost sudden death of Morede! 'And we had

a bad time with him,' said the writer. 'Perhaps it was because we came to Colorado that he all at once got back his mind; but whatever it was, he woke one morning like a fiend or a wild Indian. He raved about the mines, talked of horrible things he had done; said the fellows here would tremble even now at Rube Steele's name; and we have found out that he, or some one like him, was known in these parts as Rube Steele, a year or two back. Tell Mr Creelock that he was frantic against him. He was sensible enough in other things; but he was always calling for his pistol, and vowed that he would shoot Ben Creelock on sight! Told me that Ben was the man who had broken his skull and had set the Vigilantes on his friends. I tell you, Abel Showle, it was real frightful, and we were all glad when he died; though my heart ached for him, when I recollect the bright, clever boy he was; his mother's only son, too. But he is gone now; and bad as he may have been, I don't think we will tell Ruth of his later life, as he had caused her a deal of misery, and she don't need to think any worse of him.*

The kindly, shrewd old merchant's advice was followed; and Ruth Creelock, although she did not feign passionate grief for the half-brother who had so injured all who ought to have been dear to him, yet spoke of him with a softened feeling, which must have been changed had she known of the deadly enmity which once existed between the dead man and her husband.

MISS MARRABLE'S ELOPEMENT. IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

MISS MARTHA MARRABLE, a spinster lady of five-and-fifty, is the last of her race. Her only brother, Mr Clement Marrable, never married, and died twenty years ago at Baden-Baden, whither he had gone to drink the waters; and her two sisters, Maria and Lætitia, although they did marry, did not live to become middle-aged women. The elder, Maria, after becoming the wife of Mr Langton Larkspur, of the firm of Scrip, Larkspur, and Company, bankers, of Threadneedle Street, gave birth to a single child, a daughter, who was named Lucy; and the younger, Lætitia, having been led to the altar by Mr Septimus Allerton, of the firm of Allerton, Bond, and Benedict, brokers, of Pancake Lane, presented her husband with twin girls, of whom one only—and she was called Amy—survived her extreme infancy. It is therefore not astonishing that Miss Martha Marrable, a well-to-do woman without family ties, is exceedingly fond of the daughters of her two dead sisters. She usually has them to stay with her at least twice a year—once in the early summer at her house in Grosvenor Street; and once in the autumn at the seaside, or in Italy, whither she goes occasionally, accompanied—to the great wonder of the foreigners—by a courier, a man-servant, two maids, eleven boxes, and a green parrot. And as she is very kind to her nieces, and denies them nothing, it is not surprising that they are fully as fond of her as she is of them. But Miss Martha Marrable is growing old; whereas Miss Lucy Larkspur and

Miss Amy Allerton are both young, and intend to remain so for some years to come. It is not, therefore, to be expected that the three ladies should invariably think exactly alike on all subjects. And indeed, I am happy to say that there are not many women who do agree with Miss Marrable upon all questions; for although she is as good-hearted an old spinster as ever breathed, she is, unfortunately, a man-hater.

I have looked into the dictionary to see what the verb 'to hate' signifies, and I find that it means 'to despise' or 'to dislike intensely.' Let it not, however, be supposed that the word 'man-hater' is a stronger one than ought to be applied to Miss Marrable; for I am really not quite certain that it is altogether strong enough. She regards men as inferior animals, and looks down upon them with lofty contempt. 'Who,' she once said to her niece Lucy, 'has turned the world upside down, filled it with poverty and unhappiness, and deluged it with blood? It is Man, Lucy. If woman had always governed the earth, we should have had no Cæsar Borgias, no Judge Jefferies, no Bonapartes, and no Nana Sahibs.' And yet Miss Martha Marrable can never see a vagrant begging in the street without giving him alms. The truth is, that although she detests and despises man, she pities him; just as she pities the poor idiot whom she sometimes sees grinning and gibbering by the wayside in Italy.

These being her sentiments, Miss Marrable has not, of course, many male acquaintances. She is on good, but not affectionate terms with her widowed brothers-in-law, Mr Langton Larkspur and Mr Septimus Allerton. She once a year invites her man of business, Mr John Bones, of Cook's Court, to dine with her and them in Grosvenor Street; and she is civil to the rector of her parish, and to the medical man whom she would call in to attend her in case of illness. Yet Mr Larkspur once told Mr Allerton that this feminine dragon had had a violent love-affair when she was nineteen; and Mr Allerton—whose connection with the Marrable family is of much more recent date than that of Lucy's father—actually declared that he could well believe it. If, however, Miss Marrable did have a love-affair in her youth, I am not inclined at this time of day to cast it as a reproach in her teeth. Boys will be boys; and girls, I suppose, will be girls, though they may live to see the error of their ways, and be none the worse for their follies. One thing is certain, and that is, that at the present time, and for at least five-and-twenty years past, Miss Martha Marrable has ceased to dream of the tender passion. She still occasionally talks vaguely of going up the Nile, or of visiting the Yellowstone Region, ere she dies; but she never contemplates the possibility of getting married; and I believe that she would as soon think of allowing a man to believe that she regarded him with anything but polite aversion, as she would think of going into business as a steeple-jack, and learning to stand on one leg on the top of the cross at the summit of St Paul's Cathedral.

And yet Miss Martha Marrable was last year the heroine of a terrible scandal; and many of her misanthropic female friends have never since been able to completely believe her professions of

* For a similar case of lapsed memory, see Carpenter's *Mental Physiology*, 4th edition, pp. 460-465.

hated of man. The affair gave rise to many whispers, and was even, I understand, guardedly alluded to, with just and virtuous depreciation, in the columns of the *Woman's Suffrage Journal*, as a terrible but happily rare instance of womanly weakness and frivolity; and since the true story has never been told, I feel that it is only fair to tell it, and by telling it, to defend Miss Marrable from the dastardly charges that have been made against her established reputation for good sense and unflinching contempt of the rougher sex.

Towards the end of August, Miss Marrable and her two nieces left London for North Wales, and after a long and tiresome journey, reached Abermaw, in Merionethshire, and took rooms at the *Cors-y-Gedol Hotel*. They were accompanied, as usual, by the two maids and the green parrot; but the courier and the man-servant, being males, and their services not being imperatively required, they were left behind in London. Lucy had just celebrated her twenty-third birthday, and Amy was just about to celebrate her twenty-first; and—although I am sorry to have to record it—I am by no means astonished that they were both in love. Lucy, during the whole of the previous season, had been determinedly flirting with a designing young artist named Robert Rhodes; and Amy, younger and less experienced than her cousin, had been carrying on, even more sentimentally, with Mr Vivian Jellicoe, who, being heir to a baronetcy, found that position so arduous and fatiguing, that he was quite unfitted for any active occupation of a laborious character. Of course Miss Marrable knew nothing of these affairs. Had she suspected them, she would perhaps have not taken her nieces with her to Abermaw; for it happened that at that very watering-place, Sir Thomas Jellicoe and his son Vivian were staying when the three ladies, the two maids, and the green parrot arrived. But no foresight on Miss Marrable's part could have prevented Mr Robert Rhodes from following Lucy to North Wales. That adventurous artist had made up his mind to spend the autumn in Miss Larkspur's neighbourhood; and even if Miss Marrable had carried off her elder niece to Timbuctoo or the Society Islands, Mr Rhodes would have gone after the pair by the next train, steamboat, diligence, or caravan available.

Upon the morning, therefore, after Miss Marrable's arrival at Abermaw, she and her nieces were comfortably installed at the *Cors-y-Gedol Hotel*; while at the *Red Goat*, close by, Sir Thomas Jellicoe and Vivian occupied rooms on the first floor, and Mr Rhodes had a bedroom on the third.

In the course of that afternoon, Miss Martha Marrable, accompanied by her nieces, and followed at a respectful distance by the two maids, walked in the sunshine upon the hard sands that stretch, for I do not know how many hundred yards at low water, between the rocky hills behind the little town and the margin of Cardigan Bay. The weather was hot and sultry, and the unripped sea looked like molten lead in the glare. Much exercise was therefore out of the question; and ere long, the three ladies sat down on the seaward side of a rush-grown sandhill to read, leaving the two maids to stroll farther if they chose to do so, and to explore at their leisure the unaccustomed wonders of the seashore.

Miss Martha having arranged her sunshade to her satisfaction, opened a little volume on *The Rights of the Slaves of England*, while Lucy devoted herself to one of Ouida's novels, and Amy plunged deep into Keats. In five minutes *The Rights of the Slaves of England* fell heavily to the sand; and in three minutes more, Miss Marrable was emitting sounds which, but that I know her to be a woman who has no weakness, I should call snores. From that moment, Lucy and Amy, as if by common consent, read no more.

'Lucy,' said Amy mysteriously to her cousin, 'I have seen him.'

'So have I,' said Lucy.

'What a curious coincidence!'

'Not at all. He told me that he intended to follow us.'

'What! Vivian told you?'

'O no! Bother Vivian! You are always thinking of Vivian. I mean Robert.'

'He here too!' exclaimed Amy. 'I meant Vivian. I saw him half an hour ago, with his father.'

'Well, I advise you not to let Aunt Martha know too much,' said Lucy. 'If she suspects anything, she will take us back to London this afternoon.'

Miss Marrable murmured uneasily in her sleep. A fly had settled on her chin.

'Hush!' exclaimed the girls in unison, and then they were silent.

Not long afterwards, they caught sight of two young men who were walking arm-in-arm along the sand, a couple of hundred yards away.

'Look! There they are!' whispered Lucy. 'Aunt must not see them. We must go and warn them.' And, stealthily accompanied by her cousin, she crept away from Miss Marrable, and ran towards the approaching figures.

I need not describe the greetings that ensued. Such things are the commonplaces of seaside encounters between young men and young women who have likings for each other, and they have been described a thousand times. Suffice it to say that, a few minutes later, Lucy and Robert were sitting together under the shadow of a bathing-machine, while Amy and Vivian were confidentially talking nonsense a dozen yards off. More than half an hour elapsed ere the girls returned to Miss Marrable; but fortunately the excellent spinster was still murmuring sleepily at the fly on her chin; and when she awoke, she had no suspicion that she had been deserted by her charges. As she walked back with them to the hotel, nevertheless, as if with a strange intuitive comprehension of danger in the air, she held forth to them upon her favourite topic—the unfathomable baseness of man; and gravely warned them against ever allowing themselves even for a single moment to entertain any feeling, save one of polite aversion to the hated sex.

Thus matters went on for a week or more, Lucy and Amy meeting their lovers every day in secret, and Miss Marrable suspecting nothing. Although she knew Sir Thomas Jellicoe and his son, she treated them, whenever she encountered them, with such freezing courtesy, that they did not seek her society. As for Robert Rhodes, she did not know him; and he therefore escaped her lofty slights.

But in due time a crisis arrived; and in order

that the full bearings of the situation may be properly understood, I must briefly explain the characters of Miss Martha Marrable's undutiful nieces.

Lucy Larkspur has but little romance in her composition; she has strong feelings, but not much sentiment; and she is one of those girls who are perfectly open with their hearts. She loved Robert Rhodes, and, as she knew quite well that he also loved her, she made no secret to him of her affection for him. Amy Allerton, on the other hand, is, and always has been, sentimentally inclined. She believes, rightly or wrongly, that it is a very charming thing to

Let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek;

and she would as soon have thought of permitting Vivian Jellicoe to think that she loved him, as of attempting to win and woo the Sultan of Turkey. The consequence was that Miss Marrable, who fondly imagined that she knew all the thoughts of her elder niece, trusted her much more than she trusted her younger. She regarded Lucy as an open book that might be easily read, and Amy as a kind of oracular voice that, while saying or appearing to say one thing, might mean exactly the opposite. Miss Marrable was destined to discover that she was to some extent wrong in her estimate, so far, at all events, as Lucy was concerned; and her discovery of her error was, I grieve to say, accompanied by a good deal of pain and mortification.

Ten days had passed; and the two pair of lovers had made considerable progress. Amy, it is true, had not declared herself to Vivian, who, being a bashful young man, had, perhaps, not pressed her sufficiently; but Lucy and Robert understood one another completely, and were secretly engaged to get married at the earliest opportunity. Vivian's bashfulness could not, however, endure for an unlimited time. One morning, he and Amy found themselves together on the rocks behind the town, and the opportunity being favourable, he screwed up his courage, told her that he had never loved any one but her; and obtained a coyly given promise that she would be his.

Natures like Amy's, when they once take fire, often burn rapidly. On Monday, she became engaged to Vivian Jellicoe; on Tuesday, Vivian begged her to name a day for the wedding, and she refused; and on Wednesday, Vivian, knowing the peculiar sentiments of Miss Martha Marrable, and doubtful also, perhaps, whether his father would not throw impediments in the way of his early marriage, proposed an elopement; and Amy, with some hesitation, consented.

When she returned from her secret meeting with her lover, she of course confided her plan to her cousin. 'How foolish you are,' said Lucy; 'you know that your father would not have you do that for the world; and you will make an enemy of Aunt Martha, who is like a mother to us girls.'

'But she would never agree to our marrying, if we consulted her,' objected Amy; 'and if she knew anything of our plans, I am sure that she would manage to frustrate them. She is a dear old thing, but— Well, she is peculiar on those points.'

'I have told you what I think,' said Lucy, with an assumption of wisdom that was perhaps warranted by her superior age. 'Don't be foolish.'

But Amy was already beyond the influence of counsel. She persisted in her intention, and even claimed Lucy's sympathy and assistance, which, of course, Lucy could not ultimately withhold.

Ere an elopement can be successfully carried out, in the face especially of the jealous watchfulness of a man-hating spinster lady of middle age, numerous preparations have to be made; and, in the case of Vivian and Amy, the making of these preparations involved correspondence. Amy, therefore, bribed one of her aunt's maids to act as a go-between; and the maid in question, with a fidelity that is rare, and at the same time a treachery that, I fear, is common in her kind, promptly carried Vivian's first letter to her mistress.

Miss Martha Marrable without scruple tore open the envelope and angrily perused its contents. 'MY OWN AMY,' ran the audacious communication—'Let us settle, then, to go on Wednesday. At nine o'clock in the evening, a carriage-and-pair shall be ready to take us to Harlech, where you can stay for the night with the Joneses, who are old friends of ours; and on Thursday by mid-day we shall be married, and, I trust, never afterwards parted again. We can arrange the details between this and, then. But write, and tell me that you agree.—Your ever devoted

VIVIAN.'

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE POLECAT.

Of the several interesting animals which constitute the weasel tribe in the British Isles, not the least noteworthy is the polecat. It is at once the largest and most predaceous of the three most common *mustelidae*, and one of the greatest natural enemies of game with which preservers have to contend, and at the same time a most persevering and successful poultry-yard thief. It is, notwithstanding all these unfavourable traits in its character, but scantily known, as far as its appearance and general mode of existence are concerned; gamekeepers, for obvious reasons, not wholly unconnected with the animal's bodily discomfort, seeming to possess almost a monopoly of information concerning the natural characteristics and habits of this somewhat sturdy varmint.

The polecat is popularly supposed to be, as far as outward form goes, a larger type of stoat, while actually it is a very different-looking animal, although possessing the peculiar formation of body and litheness of limb so typical of the weasel tribe. In several details it offers some not inconsiderable difference from the generality of weasels. The somewhat more thickly set head and the bushy tail are the most prominent divergences. But taken as a whole, its appearance imbues one with the idea that it might form a very satisfactory connecting link between the *mustelidae* and the *felidae*—the weasels and the cats. Hence, probably, its name. In colour, polecats vary to some extent, on account of the nature of their furry covering. This consists of two lengths of fur; the one—which

lies
of
long
deep
these
sim
by
ficia
time
that
color
T
rare
coun
seen
whi
in a
need
throu
to b
whi
will
the
but
mod
some
tici
up
pole
the
gro
such
a fi
addi
tiva
trou
when
brah
leve
geni
in a
rab
be p
else
large
into
copp
and
Ame
men
anim
it is
be s
it m
mole
ence
T
whi
tree
its
seen
evid
pur
to i
rab
to
but
secu
the
But
disin

lies close to the skin—being thick and woolly, of a pale yellowish brown ; and the other, long and of more hair-like texture, a bright deep brown, darkening into a shiny black. As these two furs do not grow and are not shed simultaneously, but are regulated in this respect by the seasons, it is sufficiently obvious that superficial observation of these animals at different times of the year might lead one to suppose that polecats were of various and irregular colouring.

The polecat is yearly becoming rarer and rarer in the more cultivated districts of the country ; while its numbers are also slowly but seemingly very surely diminishing in those parts which the hand of man has permitted to remain in a state congenial to its tastes and habits. We need not be at any pains to enumerate the districts throughout the United Kingdom where it is still to be found, because, when the nature of the haunts which it loves are presently set forth, such districts will naturally suggest themselves. The stoat and the weasel are both to some extent gregarious ; but the polecat seems to prefer a more solitary mode of existence ; and it rarely happens that if some few of them are found to frequent any particular spot, many more of their kind have taken up their abode in the near neighbourhood. The polecat chiefly haunts small dark fir-woods, where the surface is rough and broken, and much overgrown with tangled and inhospitable brake. If such a clump of trees be situated at the corner of a field or along some irregular farm-road, it has additional recommendations. In the hilly uncultivated parts, the streams invariably pursue a troubled course through rough and broken ground, where large boulders and low thickly bristling brake alternate with gorse and bracken-covered level ground. Here the polecat also finds a congenial haunt, away from the abodes of man, and in a situation where provender, in the shape of rabbits and hares and winged game, is likely to be plentiful and easily obtained. When nothing else will grow on the steep and barren hillside, large areas of oak are often planted, not to grow into large spreading trees, but only into oak-coppice, which may afford oak-bark for the tanner, and firewood for the dwellers in the country. Amongst this copse the polecat has many inducements to form its lair, and there it will find many animals and birds upon which to prey. In fact, it is not particular as to its haunts, if it can only be situated in rough and tree-grown parts, where it may obtain that security from observation and molestation which seems a necessity of its existence.

The actual lair of the animal may be anywhere—in any crevice of a rock, in a hollow tree or hole in the ground ; but the place where its young are born and reared, is chosen after seemingly greater deliberation, and with an evident object. It prefers for this important purpose a burrow in the soil, and as a rule, adapts to its use and occupation that of some departed rabbit. Failing this, it will be at evident pains to scoop out a burrow for itself ; though this is but a poor affair beside the convenient and more secure subterranean dwelling usually formed by the ubiquitous and nimble rodent in question. But if rabbit-burrows be scarce, and the polecat disinclined for burrowing, it will perforc seek

out some warm, secure nook amongst the interstices of some boulders, or beneath some irregular heap of large stones collected by the industrious agriculturist, and set about forming its lair in that. This lair resembles to some extent the breeding-place formed by the rabbit, but is usually distinguishable from that by the greater regularity and evenness with which the dry leaves, dry grass, moss, and the like are formed and worked together to afford a suitable receptacle for the young when born. These are usually five or six in number, occasionally more, not unfrequently less. The months of May and June seem to be about the time when they are brought forth ; but they rarely make their appearance above ground till some time after they are born. It is uncertain whether, while the young are being reared, the male becomes the sole provider of food ; but we fancy not, and that when the female can snatch an occasion, she exercises her predatory desires in common with her mate.

Polecats are not by any means night-hunters, although, no doubt, they filch a good deal of their prey under cover of the darkness. Their favourite time for hunting seems to be the early morning ; and as soon as they leave the shelter of their domain they, as a rule, set off for some rabbit-burrow—whether tenanted or not is immaterial—and indulge in a run through its winding tunnels. After this, they will get to some hedgerow, and hunt it down. If there be any old palings or a gate adjacent, they are sure to stop and rub themselves against the woodwork ; and if several of the varmint be together, they may throw off their sober exterior, and indulge in a little play ; and then they set off in serious fashion to obtain their food, which they draw, as a rule, in small portions from many victims. Like all the weasel tribe, the polecat seems to possess an extreme and bloodthirsty rapacity. It is never content to capture and kill sufficient for its own immediate use, but will destroy often as many birds and animals in one day as would serve it for a week, nay, oftentimes for a month's sustenance. Hence the large amount of damage this predaceously inclined little creature will commit. The catalogue of what is to its taste in the shape of birds and animals is a long one—all kinds of furred and feathered game, poultry even, to turkeys ; rats and some kinds of mice ; frogs, eels, and fish. The rabbit, where plentiful, is its most common victim, for it finds bunny a somewhat easy capture in its burrow, where, lying probably unconscious of impending danger, it may suddenly find the enemy at its throat, whence in a few seconds the marauder will have sucked its life-blood.

Possessed of powers of scent far keener than any hound, the polecat can and will track hares long distances in their wanderings, and eventually effect their capture. Upon the little nut-brown partridge or the more sober-looking grouse it will steal in the early dawn or at 'even's stilly hour ;' and sometimes, before the former is aware of the polecat's presence, it will have, by a sharp irresistible bite into its brains, transferred it and perhaps several others beyond the reach of the sportsman's gun. Being at need a strong and rapid swimmer, the polecat has often been known to take eels and other fish from the streams ; but unless other food be scarce, it

usually refrains from entering the unstable element in search of food. Amongst poultry, its operations are often wholesale, and must be disheartening to a degree to the industrious henwife; for, as we said before, it does not confine itself to supplying its actual wants, but, given the chance of some wholesale killing, it indulges its cruel instincts apparently more for the pleasure than for the necessity of the thing. It is this habit, common to all the animals and birds coming under the definition 'vermin,' which renders them so extremely destructive. One thing may be said in the polecat's favour, which is, that it is a very determined enemy of the rat, although the latter's fierceness often prevents the former from bringing to a successful conclusion any crusade it may have opened against it. But the polecat is all the same a most courageous little animal; and its fierceness when attacked, the pluck with which it will fight against superior odds, and the wonderful amount of activity it can bring to bear, prove it to be no mean enemy for a terrier of two or three times its size. Moreover, it does not disdain when 'cornered,' or when its progeny are threatened, to attack human beings. Under the circumstances, it is a dangerous creature to deal with, its bite being very painful and lasting.

In addition to these qualities for attack, the polecat is possessed of a peculiar and very disagreeable means of defence. This consists in the secretion of a liquid substance of disgustingly fetid odour, which the animal has the power of emitting at will. This it uses in case of attack chiefly by men or dogs; and as we fancy it is as objectionable and intolerable to its canine as to its human enemies, the benefit it derives from this possession may be better imagined than described. Owing doubtless to this habit, the animal frequently goes by the name of foulmart in England, and foumart in Scotland.

No one who has any actual knowledge of the habits of the polecat can come to any other conclusion than that it is a most destructive animal, and one whose presence is not to be tolerated, much less desired, either in the game preserve or in the neighbourhood of the poultry-yard; and yet one of the most ridiculous of superstitions obtains amongst many farmers and country-people as to this animal. It is said to be capable of appreciating hospitality, and acting in accordance with the unwritten laws of such, so that if one encourage the animal and afford it shelter, it will refrain from destroying the live-stock of the person who so amiably entertains it. This is, one must admit, a very pretty little piece of nonsense. But, notwithstanding this, polecats are unmistakably becoming fewer and fewer every year, and we shall soon see it a very rare animal.

AN OLD, OLD STORY.

A CASUAL meeting—one of merest chance;
An introduction—bows, a smile, a dance.
'Twas thus we met; and little dreamed I then
He would be more to me than other men.
Of course I thought him handsome, bright, and gay;
But so were others—he not more than they.
My heart, that might the future have revealed,
Was stilled and sleeping, all its secrets sealed.

To meet so coolly seems a mystery now;
To part so gaily—ah, I wonder how!
To clasp his hand, to lean upon his arm,
Yet no soft flutterings fill me with alarm;
To stand beside him, close beside his heart,
Nor dream that of my own it formed a part—
'Twas all so natural! Oh, we little knew
What fate was shaping out betwixt us two;
What each to each, what heart to heart might be,
What I should be to him—what he to me.

A moment when I first had dared to feel
Emotions which my pride would fain conceal,
When sudden thoughts across my mind were cast,
And sudden flutterings made my heart beat fast;
When fancies strange as sweet, and sweet as strange,
Sought shy admittance, through my heart to range.
O timid hopes, soft doubts, and tender fear!
O coy concealment from the one most dear!
O burning blushes that unbidden rise!
O faltering tongue, and traitorous tell-tale eyes!
O sweet anxiety, and pleasing pain,
To love—to love; and not to love in vain!
To watch his eye, and half in wonder see
'Twas always brightest when it fell on me;
To mark, when by my side, his tender tone,
His hand's soft pressure when it held my own;
O thus to watch, and wait for him to tell,
What my heart whispered that it knew full well!

A summer evening, calm, and bright, and fair;
A moonlit garden, he beside me there;
My trembling hand above my heart was pressed,
To calm its thrills of happy, sweet unrest.
I longed so much his tale of love to hear,
Yet when he spoke was filled with fluttering fear—
A fear lest I might all unworthy prove
Of his affection true, of his deep love;
And something of my fears he seemed to know,
His manly voice had grown so soft and low.
Ah! what a tale he whispered in my ear,
So hard to answer, but how sweet to hear!
I could not answer; all my heart seemed filled
With language, but my recreant tongue was stilled.
And oh! so tender was his melting mood!
He clasped my hand—the clasp I understood;
He sought my eyes—but oh! I dared not raise
Those little tell-tales to receive his gaze;
'One little word,' he said, with fond caress.
I spoke; that word, that little word was—'Yes!'

A morning when the sunshine seemed to be
The fairest thing on this fair earth to me,
For—so at least old tales and stories run—
The bride is blessed whom it shines upon.
Assembled friends with presents rich and rare;
A laughing group of girlish bridesmaids fair;
A father—mother, clasping to their heart
The darling child with whom they fear to part,
The daughter who, like timid bird caressed,
Prepares to flutter from the parent nest.
And dearer, dearest to that blushing bride
Is he whose place till death is by her side.
Ah, ever side by side, and hand in hand,
And heart to heart, henceforth those twain must stand.

Then many a fond caress mid tearful smiles;
Bells pealing, holy altar, flower-strewn aisles;
A wreath—a snowy robe—a bridal veil—
A happy bride, who tells this 'old, old tale!'

FLORENCE NIXON.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH.